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engaged in the enforcement of law. If these various police functions were grouped together in one department, it would be possible to reduce the expenses and to give better services to the community. The question then arises what would become of the statistical part of the labor commissioners' work.

This should go where it naturally belongs, to the departments of the state universities that are dealing with matters of statistics. Most of the state universities now have trained men engaged in the teaching of economics and political science. These men understand the use of statistics, and could, if authorized by the state, collect data, analyze and give results and conclusions that would possess some value. Some expenses would be incurred in giving over this function to the state universities, but it would not be any greater than now rests upon the state in the method pursued at present. Graduate students could be used to aid in the collection and in the analysis of the data gathered. It would be necessary, however, to have the co-operation of the police department of the state to collect some of the data relating to factories and laborers, which would then be handed over to the statistical department for tabulation.

Nothing has been done in this direction in our various commonwealths, but certainly there is much that the state universities can do in the work of the government which might well be delegated to them and which would result undoubtedly in better service to the community, and among these is the collection of statistics and their analysis. It is true that such a division of state functions and the centralization of police power in one department would be vigorously opposed on the part of politicians, but nevertheless this must be done sooner or later, and it certainly is worth the consideration of students and the authorities in the state universities.

FRANK L. MCVEY.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA.

NEW YORK LABOR STATISTICS.

THE latest report of the New York Bureau of Labor Statistics¹ offers a notable instance of the statistical methods and results that are to be looked for at the hands of our state bureaus.

¹ *Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of New York, 1899.*

This voluminous report covering the year ending September 30, 1899, consists of five parts :

Part I.	The Economic Condition of Organized Labor	-	553 pages
Part II.	The Compensation of Accidental Injuries to Workingmen	- - - - -	609 pages
Part III.	Employment and Wages from 1896 to 1899	-	55 pages
Part IV.	Report of the State Free Employment Bureau	-	25 pages
Part V.	Text of the Labor Laws of 1899	- - -	18 pages

The statistics of Part I of this report would be of no inconsiderable value to the economic student, as showing the condition of organized labor in the leading commercial and manufacturing state of the Union, were it not for some unfortunate inaccuracies.

Regarding these data, Commissioner McMackin remarks in his preface :

The statistics of Part I pertaining to the members of labor unions are compiled from quarterly reports made to the bureau by the union secretaries. They show the membership of the labor organizations of the state in four periods of the year and the number of members unemployed at the same dates. They also give the number of days worked by the members of organizations in each quarter of the year with the amount of their quarterly earnings.

We find it farther explained in the report (p. 3) that "the information for such reports is furnished to the secretaries of each trade union or labor organization by the individual members thereof on blanks supplied by the bureau."

It seems quite evident that the reliability of these statistics must depend, so far at least as they relate to earnings and employment, upon accuracy of the reports of the individual members of the unions. Nor was the response from members of the unions so general as to be entirely satisfactory, as may be inferred from the commissioner's remark :

It cannot be maintained that the use of the individual blanks is universal. Nevertheless, the secretary of the average small union inevitably possesses fairly accurate knowledge of the amount of employment and earnings of each member of the organization. In the case of the large unions such knowledge is more likely to be in the nature of an estimate, unless the union levies its dues in proportion to the wages of members, and, therefore, requires from each of its members a weekly report of his earnings.

Trade unions seldom, if ever, levy dues in proportion to the earnings of its members, and it seems improbable that secretaries of even

small labor organizations possess the accurate knowledge regarding the employment and earnings of their members, that would enable them to furnish estimates worthy of compilation. That such knowledge is not possessed by secretaries of the larger organizations which embrace in their membership the larger proportion of the trade unionists of the state is apparent from the absurd statistics of membership and unemployment of Tables I and III of this report. We can hardly suppose that the membership of numerous organizations can be correctly represented for four successive quarters in round numbers of hundreds as appears in Table I; or that the amount of unemployment can be correctly indicated by similar round numbers found in Table III in which is given, together with the membership as reported in Table I, statistics of the number of members idle at the end of each of four quarters and also of the number unemployed in each entire quarter.

According to this table, which includes the fourth quarter of 1898 and three quarters of 1899, in a steamfitters' union in that part of New York City designated as Manhattan there was at the end of the quarter ending December 1898 and also of the first quarter of 1899 a membership of a round 500 of whom just an even 300 were idle. For the second quarter an even 600 and for the third quarter an even 700 are reported of whom an even 30 in the former and none in the latter quarters were idle. For the same locality it appears that of 2100 members of a plumbers' union in the fourth quarter of 1898 525 members, or just one fourth, were idle, and that in the following quarter the membership had decreased to an even 2000, of whom just 1500, or three fourths, were idle. For the succeeding quarters the membership is given as an even 2800, of whom none were idle save five in the second quarter. We find also in this union that those reported idle at the end of each quarter are also reported as idle during the entire quarter. It appears also that, while three fourths of the members of this union were idle during the entire first quarter of 1899, not a single member of a large union of the same trade, located across the bridge in Brooklyn, was unemployed for the same period. For this Brooklyn union we find the round numbers 800 given as the membership in two quarters and 840 for the other two quarters. Of these just an even half hundred were idle at the end of the first quarter of 1899. A scrutiny of the returns of the plasterers', electrical workers', and varnishers' unions displays the same peculiarities. While these

and other instances that might be cited are not very numerous, they all occur where a single large union is the only union in the same trade and locality; for where there are several unions their numbers and aggregate membership appear separately in the table. The instances therefore in which we discover careless estimates or guesses seem sufficiently numerous to discredit the data as accurate statements of the amount of employment, earnings, and membership of the labor unions of the state. Besides its annual reports the bureau issues quarterly bulletins from which we obtain later information than appears in the report. From the September *Bulletin* we take the following table showing the number and membership of labor organizations of the state at the end of June:

Year	Unions	Membership		
		Men	Women	Total
1894 - - - -	860	.....	.....	157,197
1895 - - - -	927	.....	.....	180,231
1897 - - - -	976	147,105	4,101	151,206
1898 - - - -	1,079	164,802	7,538	172,340
1899 - - - -	1,210	180,756	7,699	188,455
1900 - - - -	1,603	236,820	10,782	247,602

It appears by the December 1900 *Bulletin* that for the succeeding quarter there was an increase of 34 in the number of organizations and a decrease in membership of 2220. The decrease appears to have been entirely of males—the women showing an increase of 1050, while the men decreased 3270.

The report adopts three methods of ascertaining the amount of unemployment. The first method is to ascertain the number idle at the end of each quarterly period. The number and percentage of membership unemployed at the end of each quarter of the fiscal years 1896-1899 is given as follows:

At the end of —	Actual number unemployed			Percentage of membership		
	1898-9	1897-8	1896-7	1898-9	1897-8	1896-7
December - - - -	46,603	39,353	.....	26.7	26.6	....
March - - - -	31,751	37,857	43,054	18.3	21.0	30.6
June - - - -	20,141	35,643	27,378	10.9	20.7	18.1
September - - - -	9,590	22,485	23,230	4.7	10.3	13.8

The second method of ascertaining the amount of unemployment is to ascertain the number continuously idle during each entire quarterly period. This method seems inadequate and likely to be misleading, for by it no unemployment would be shown, though the workers were almost continuously idle in case each worker obtained so much as a single day's employment. The following table is presented as the result of this method :

A. NUMBER IDLE.

	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
1897 - - - - -	35,381	17,877	10,893	10,132
1898 - - - - -	18,102	10,272	9,734	15,477
1899 - - - - -	22,658	6,730	4,790	.....

B. PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL MEMBERSHIP IDLE.

1897 - - - - -	24.8	11.8	6.5	5.8
1898 - - - - -	10.1	6.0	5.7	8.9
1899 - - - - -	13.1	3.7	2.3	....

The third method of determining the amount of unemployment was to ascertain from each worker the number of working days either lost or accomplished, and the remark is true that "if this method could be faithfully carried out, it would obviously give the most nearly exact results possible under any system." The claim made by the bureau that "by confining the investigation to members of distinct organizations, reporting through their secretaries, a considerable approach to accuracy can be obtained," may from reasons given above be doubted. The results of the inquiry are condensed as follows :

Number of days worked in each quarter	1898 Fourth quarter	1899 First quarter	1899 Second quarter	1899 Third quarter
0 (the unemployed) - - - - -	9.1	13.3	3.7	2.4
1-29 (less than 1 month) - - - - -	4.9	3.5	2.2	1.5
30-59 (between one and two months) - - - - -	27.5	23.4	17.0	9.4
60-79 (about three months) - - - - -	50.8	51.8	68.7	77.2
80 or over - - - - -	7.7	7.9	8.1	9.5
	100.0	99.9	99.7	100.0

The following table is given as the briefest expression of the amount of employment in a given period, being the average number

of days worked per worker, determined by dividing the aggregate number of days worked in the quarter by all members of unions by the number of members:

A. MEN.

Year	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
1897 - - - - -	58	69	67	65
1898 - - - - -	62	61	65	63
1899 - - - - -	64	70	71	..

B. WOMEN.

Year	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
1897 - - - - -	63	57	66	56
1898 - - - - -	61	58	64	65
1899 - - - - -	68	72	71	..

The report makes no attempt to compute general averages of wages or earnings for the entire body of workers, remarking that this might involve misleading conclusions, because such comparisons should properly be confined to individual trades, or at any rate, to the groups of trades in each industry. Therefore, in the building trades, comprising almost one third of the trade unionists of the state, we find the following comparison of quarterly earnings:

Year	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
1897 - - - - -	\$152.61	\$164.22	\$185.73	\$182.38
1898 - - - - -	162.67	168.33	192.49	157.61
1899 - - - - -	154.40	212.47	223.59	.....

It is remarked: "The increase does not come until the second quarter of 1899, but in that and the third quarter it is very conspicuous." As representing a second large group of organized workingmen the following table is presented as showing the quarterly earnings of employees of steam railroads:

Year	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
1897 - - - - -	\$204.52	\$207.54	\$222.73	\$228.80
1898 - - - - -	215.69	204.25	213.28	218.88
1899 - - - - -	216.10	219.83	226.63	.....

Here, as remarked, we find again, a large increase of earnings in the second and third quarters. The same holds true in the typographical and tailors' and garment-making trades.

The following table represents the earnings of women in the garment-making and tobacco trades, which comprise nearly all female trade unionists :

A. GARMENT-MAKING.

Year	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
1897	\$70.46	\$57.69	\$88.84	\$75.03
1898	64.46	47.95	66.69	66.18
1899	74.46	78.84	83.54	.....

B. TOBACCO TRADES.

1897	\$100.14	\$ 94.58	\$ 98.53	\$62.50
1898	56.07	80.00	65.84	97.94
1899	98.01	95.39	126.64	.....

While these statistics are particularly favorable for the second and third quarters of 1899, statistics presented in the *Bulletin* show a very marked decline both in employment and earnings for the corresponding quarters of 1900. As appears by the September *Bulletin* (1900) the percentage of trade unionists unemployed at the end of June had increased from 10.9 per cent. in 1899 to 20.7 per cent. in 1900, while the percentage of those continuously unemployed for the entire quarter had increased from 3.7 to 9.4 per cent. For the following quarter, as shown in the December *Bulletin*, the percentage of unemployed at the end of the quarter, September 30, had increased from 4.7 to 13.3, while the percentage of those continuously idle during the entire quarter had increased from 2.3 to 5.4.

The principal cause of increased unemployment is stated as due to strikes and to the check in building operations following the advance in prices. Increased unemployment at the end of the second quarter is shown to have occurred in ten out of twelve industries, the exceptions being public employment and theaters and music.

The exceptions to increased unemployment at the end of the third quarter were restaurants, retail trade, and miscellaneous. The most decided increase of unemployment occurred in building, clothing, and

cigar making. It is stated that "no special reason can be put forward to explain the unusually large number of working people idle in the clothing trades."

The report makes no attempt to discover the economic condition of the great mass of wage-earners unconnected with labor organizations,¹ but it is remarked in the statistics of Part I:

Since trade unions embrace in their membership, as a rule, the best paid and most highly skilled classes of workmen, these statistics undoubtedly make a somewhat more favorable showing for the so-called "working classes" than would more comprehensive statistics; but within the specified trades and in the specified cities the conditions of the organized workmen may be considered fairly typical on account of the general tendency toward uniformity of wages and hours of labor at a given time and place.

We find, however, in Part III of this report a compilation of returns for 3553 manufacturing establishments as made by employers which do not seem to agree entirely with the data of Part I obtained from secretaries of trade unions. While the manufacturers' returns indicate a considerable increase in the number of employees, they do not show a corresponding increase in the amount paid as wages. This is particularly true for the year ending June 30, 1899, and of the building industry in which, according to the data of Part I, there was an increase in earnings as well as of employment. No attempt is made to compute average wages or earnings, either for the combined or separate industries, and only the total wages paid during the year and the number of employees June 30 are given. The following table from page 1167 of the report shows the number of employees in the 3553 establishments for which complete returns were obtained for the period 1896-1899.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES.

Year	On June 30	Increase over preceding year	
		Aggregate	Per cent.
1896	299,957	....	....
1897	304,376	4,419	1.47
1898	326,090	21,714	7.14
1899	356,278	30,188	9.24

¹ According to the United States Census of 1890 the average number of employees in the manufacturing industries of New York state was 850,084, while, as shown by this report, the total number of trade unionists in all industries, September 3, 1899, was 209,020.

On page 1169 we find the following table with the accompanying remark :

The following statistics do not demonstrate an increase in average earnings, but simply of increased business activity and in the amount of money distributed as wages among the employees of the state :

TOTAL AMOUNT PAID IN WAGES DURING THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 30.

Year	Aggregate	Increase (+) or decrease (-) over preceding year
1896 - - - - -	\$141,184,845	.....
1897 - - - - -	138,577,878	- 2,606,967 - 1.8
1898 - - - - -	151,279,010	+ 12,701,132 + 9.2
1899 - - - - -	162,645,649	+ 11,366,639 + 7.5

If we divide the total wages by the number of employees, there appears a decrease in every year except 1898, a decrease for the entire period from \$470 to \$453. Following the same method with similar data for 190 establishments in the building industry, we discover from 1898 to 1899 a decrease in earnings per employee from \$641.54 to \$573.25. A period (the four quarters ending June 30, 1899) in which, according to the data of Part I, which we have previously presented, there was an increase in the average earnings of trade unionists from \$699.01 to \$716.97. These establishments are supposedly mostly, if not entirely, located in the principal cities; and are establishments in which trade unionists are chiefly employed.

It is, of course, possible that the number of employees, June 30, may not be at both periods an equally fair divisor, but it is the only number reported, which suggests the remark that it is to be regretted that the labor bureau of our leading industrial state should have neglected to obtain more complete and accurate information regarding the economic condition of its wage-earners.

No less remarkable seems the conclusion drawn from the inadequate data obtained from a comparatively few establishments of record-breaking industrial activity. That "the number of establishments reporting is very small compared with the number given in the United States census," is admitted; but it is claimed that "the Bureau's returns cover between one third and one half of the manufacturing industry of the state," and it says that "the explanation is the concentration of capital and labor in large establishments." Showing that less than 10 per cent. of the establishments considered in the report employed

nearly 50 per cent. of the wage-earners, it draws the conclusion "that to show the ups and downs of trade, it is a legitimate method to leave out of account 60,000 odd small establishments and confine attention to a comparatively few large enterprises." While such method may be proper enough for some purposes, in order to discover the average earnings, wages, or working time—which the report does not attempt to do—it hardly seems legitimate to exhibit the percentage of increase in the amount of wages paid in a few rapidly-growing establishments as indicating the general increase in business activity and improvement in trade conditions. On page 1170 the report presents a table showing the number of employees and total amount of wages paid from 1890 to 1899 in 66 of the larger establishments principally in the iron and steel industry. To bring out in a clearer form the striking improvement in 1899 over previous years, the wages for each year are compared with the average of the period as a base line; 1890 and 1891 standing at 98, and 1899 at 127, as against 100, seemingly indicate an increase of nearly 30 per cent. But no account is taken of the amount of wages paid during the earlier years in the smaller establishments that may have been absorbed by the larger ones or driven out of business. Thus we have a plausible demonstration of the truth of the statement in the preface that "the amount paid in wages in 1899 surpassed the prosperous year 1892."

Such statistics can have only a qualified value to economic students. It is to be regretted that such good opportunities as this bureau has for statistical research should be vitiated by slipshod methods, and that scientific work should be hampered by political considerations.

H. L. BLISS.

THE CENSUS OF PORTO RICO.¹

THE *Report on the Census of Porto Rico*, which has just appeared under the auspices of the war department, is practically identical in plan with the *Report on the Census of Cuba*, reviewed in the last issue of this JOURNAL. The preliminary field-work in both cases was done by native enumerators and supervisors working under the direction of an experienced official of the American census office, but the tables were compiled and the explanatory text was written in Washington.

¹ *Report on the Census of Porto Rico, 1899.* J. P. Sanger, director; Henry Gannett, Walter F. Willcox, statistical experts. Washington, 1900.